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Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

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Wednesday, 22 December 2010, 11.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Rice/Mrs. DiCarlo	(United States of America)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Dunlop
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Briens
	Gabon	Mr. Moungara Moussotsi
	Japan	Mr. Nishida
	Lebanon	Mr. Assaf
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Nigeria	Mr. Onemola
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Parham

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2010/630)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2010/630)

The President: As this is the last scheduled meeting of the Security Council for this year, I would like to express, on behalf of the Council, our deep appreciation and thanks to our colleagues who will be leaving us at the end of the year: Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting of Austria, Ambassador Tsuneo Nishida of Japan, Ambassador Claude Heller of Mexico, Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan of Turkey and Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda of Uganda. We have been through a lot together over the past two years. We have appreciated their seriousness of purpose, their dedication to the work of the Security Council and their friendship.

I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy and Pakistan, requesting to participate in this meeting. I propose to invite those representatives to participate in this meeting without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: On behalf of the Security Council, I extend an invitation under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

There being no objected it is so decided.

I have received a letter from His Excellency Mr. Peter Schwaiger, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, in which he requests to participate in this meeting in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2010/630, the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. Staffan de Mistura.

Mr. De Mistura: I thank you, Madam President, for giving us the opportunity as the year draws to a close to review, together with the Security Council, the situation in Afghanistan from the United Nations point of view during a period of many developments. But before doing so, I would like on behalf of all of my Afghan, United Nations, and national and international colleagues, and frankly of the whole international diplomatic community in Kabul, to pay tribute and to pay our respects to the memory of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. I was told by someone that his last words to an Afghan doctor who started treating him when he went to the hospital were "Please work for peace in Afghanistan".

We are grateful to him and we thank him for his passionate commitment to assisting the Afghan people in seeking their own political stability. I would like to conclude this reflection with a few seconds of personal prayer and silence.

Thank you, Madam President.

My presentation, which will be short as the report has already been issued, will focus on the following topics: the security situation and its linkage to the NATO summit in Lisbon, transition, aid coherence/realignment, human rights, reconciliation, regional engagement, the serious issue of the drugs affecting Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, the elections, and some brief remarks on the budget.

With regard to the security situation, the combined increased activities by Afghan and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces are intensifying and are showing results. At the same time, we are detecting from anti-Government elements attempts to show on their side some spectacular attacks in order to dilute the feeling of a change of momentum. What does that mean?

It means that we should be expecting and should be ready for, I am afraid, a tense security environment

over the next few months. Our assessment is that the situation may get worse before it gets better. And the proof of that was the attack on the United Nations centre at Herat, where 21 of our colleagues were stationed. They all survived, thanks to luck, good preparation, strong support from the Afghan security forces around them and our own private security company linked to the Gurkha support. But it is a signal; it is a message.

The Lisbon NATO summit, in our view, was very successful. The linking of the two dates — 2011 and 2014 — as a long beginning of a long end contributed to establishing a much clearer perspective for all international, regional and national players about mutual commitment to Afghanistan.

With regard to transition, the message is clear, and I am sure that we are all hearing it: allow a more rapid delegation of responsibility and ownership to the Afghan authorities. In other words — to use a slogan that we heard in Lisbon and which I think is a very good one — to help, support and assist the Afghan authorities to stand on their own, but not to stand alone.

The United Nations system and I myself, on behalf of the Secretary-General, are planning — as we are expected to do by this Council and, above all, by the Afghan authorities — to increase, security permitting, our own capacity in the areas where transition is expected to take place and also in areas where security is improving, in order to do what we should be doing — doing much more to assist in capacity-building and support for Afghan ownership of Afghan territory.

We believe that, with the leadership of the Afghan authorities and Mr. Ashraf Ghani, together with the teams that have been established, we are moving in the right direction on transition, and the United Nations, as I said, will, with the blessing of the Council, be doing its part.

On aid coherence, since the Kabul Conference we have been talking about aid realignment, which then leads to aid coherence. Aid realignment means, basically, what we heard at the Kabul Conference, which calls for a stronger and more effective realignment of all bilateral and multilateral aid along the lines of the priorities set by the Afghan authorities, according to clear benchmarks set by both sides.

The United Nations, that is, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), working closely in partnership and as co-Chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, which is the institution that was created jointly by the Afghan authorities and the international community to actually assist, monitor and support the realignment, will be increasing its activities in that field. I have new teams coming in. One senior colleague, in particular, will join me, who has been assigned particularly to support the enhancement.

Human rights are crucial. Everybody recognizes that, and we are working on that issue. The priority for us is to be able to continue to issue reports that are seen as significant because they are considered to be objective and frank — sometimes too frank — but they nonetheless help everyone to realize that the civilian rights in human rights in Afghanistan are important for the Afghans.

The issue of civilian casualties has been an issue included in our report, and we will continue to include that issue, hoping to improve that situation further with fine-tuning. We have heard from President Karzai several times, as well as from many other partners, how important it is to actually address the issue of civilian casualties in the best possible way; hopefully we will not see repetitions of the figures we have seen so far. There has, however, been an increase, as the Council knows.

On the issue of women, reports are coming out — and more will come out — about the violence affecting women in particular. I must say, the results of the election so far have been very encouraging regarding the engagement and the involvement of women in the future parliament. But we will continue to play our role in that area. That has been requested by everyone, and it is, frankly, required by our own moral compass.

On reconciliation and reintegration, everyone recognizes that there is no military solution. Frankly, even the Taliban do so, even if they will not say so publicly. There is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan — hence the importance of initiatives such as the Peace Jirga and the establishment, by President Karzai, of the High Peace Council. The United Nations, through its own newly established Salaam Support Group, in which everyone will be invited to participate, depending on their level of competence and the requirements by the Afghan

authorities, has been put at the disposal of the High Peace Council. That participation will be based on competence, the preparation of reports, visions and substantive and substantial support for what could suddenly become an important and accelerated level of dialogue. Additionally, that support will come in the form of logistics. What the Council is helping us with, by asking for a strong logistical capacity, is being put at the disposal of the Afghans, who are going to talk to each other, both inside or outside Afghanistan. That has already been requested three times, and we have provided it on the Council's behalf.

Then, of course, confidence-building measures represent an area where the United Nations, the Security Council and the Mission can help in eventually facilitating or explaining how to better implement such measures, if and when they are required.

On regional engagements, everybody again recognizes that if there is — and when there is, insha'allah — actual involvement in a dialogue, it will be possible to sustain national dialogue only through a long-term constructive engagement by all regional players, and that means not only the immediate neighbours, but also the distant and concerned neighbours. In that sense, many initiatives are taking place. As we speak, if I am not mistaken, President Karzai is in Ankara for discussions facilitated by the Turkish Government on a trilateral basis. I think many more meetings are likely to take place in that context in the coming year. I understand that even in Washington, D.C., there is the possibility of a trilateral opportunity sometime early next year. All those bilateral, trilateral and regional initiatives are welcome and should be supported in the right direction.

The United Nations in Kabul is doing its part in the Kabul Silk Road initiative and is supporting other initiatives by regional players. We understand that, by the end of next year, in November, another Bonn conference will possibly take place, as announced at the NATO summit, and it will probably be — and I do not want to prejudge here the decision by the Turkish authorities — preceded by another regional opportunity and discussion of the type we have had in the past. Whatever the case, we will play a role, because we recognize that all members of the regional context are also Members of the United Nations.

On the issue of drugs, which is linked to the question of regional issues, there has been a substantial increase in drug production in spite of a disease affecting drug production that we hope was sent by God. It has also, unfortunately, contributed to an increase in price and therefore also to an increase in interest in producing, selling, transporting and storing drugs. That is affecting 900,000 Afghans and major neighbours, both close and distant. We welcome the visit to Kabul of the new Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, who has been very engaged and has been giving renewed energy to the initiatives at the regional and national levels in that context.

On elections, allow me to make a few points — actually eight, but each of them short — on behalf of the diplomatic community in Kabul and myself.

First, although it is late, we can never stress enough how proud all of us are and should be and must congratulate the Afghan people, the Afghan National Security Forces and President Karzai for having held elections in a country that, we know, is in a conflict and is facing very challenging circumstances.

Second, at the end of the day, 4.2 million Afghans, out of 10.5 million eligible voters, voted despite the security situation and in spite of two serious warnings from the Taliban to not go to vote.

Third, we recognize the diligent, committed and intense work carried out by the two Afghan independent electoral commissions nominated by the President.

Fourth, the United Nations, the Russian Federation, the United States, the European Union, Japan, Canada and Turkey have all welcomed the announcement — I repeat, the announcement — by the electoral commissions on 24 November, and finally on 30 November, of the certification of the results of the 18 September Wolesi Jirga elections.

Fifth, the elections of 18 September, like all other previous elections, included substantial numbers of cases of fraud and irregularities. That is regrettable, but we are dealing with a young democracy in a very difficult environment. Both the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission, the two electoral commissions, working together, tried and did a lot of work, we have to recognize, in trying to remove those cases of fraud that

they were able to detect. By doing so, they sent a signal against impunity, which might have been an important message for all Afghans to hear.

Sixth, we have to recognize the independence of all Afghan institutions, both electoral and judiciary, and that they act within their clearly defined areas of competence and in accordance with the relevant Afghan laws and the Afghan Constitution.

Seventh, with the certification of all results by the bodies mandated by the law, the two Electoral Commissions, the electoral process is now procedurally concluded. Notwithstanding whatever the judiciary system will have to do, following its own procedures, the expected next steps are the inauguration of the new Parliament, pursuant to the electoral law.

Finally, we welcome the announcement by President Karzai's spokesperson that the President intends to inaugurate the new Parliament by the end of January.

Now that we have gone through the electoral process, we must look into electoral reform. We have been discussing the issue with all Afghan authorities and members of Parliament. The feeling is that there is a need for the sort of electoral reform that will help to prevent some of the problems that have been encountered in the latest election and in previous elections. That is the task that we will have to take on together. We are confident that the Afghan capacity for bringing an inclusive political approach to solving some of the pending issues will bring about inclusive participation — despite the previous exclusion of some ethnic groups in the elections — hopefully before January.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the Afghan authorities, members of the Security Council, our friend and colleague who is the European Union representative in Kabul, and our friends and colleagues representing the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul for the support that we have consistently received in implementing the UNAMA mandate, which can only be fulfilled — and incrementally so — if the necessary resources are allocated to it in the next budget.

The President: I thank Special Representative de Mistura for his briefing and I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): First of all, allow me to congratulate you, Madame President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of December. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2010/630) and Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his informative briefing and his dedicated and very able leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to join my good friend, Mr. de Mistura, in paying tribute to the memory of the late Ambassador Holbrooke, whose tireless efforts for peace and security in Afghanistan will be remembered for many years to come.

We have arrived at the end of an eventful and historic year in Afghanistan. The year began with the London Conference, which was followed by the Peace Jirga, the Kabul Conference, the second parliamentary elections and the NATO Summit in Lisbon. This year, we made momentous strides towards defining and strengthening our relationship with international partners, and sought to re-engage the Afghan people in all efforts to bring peace and security to our country, enhance collaboration with regional partners and reach out to the armed opposition.

The Lisbon Conference was a milestone on the road towards reassuring an enduring partnership between Afghanistan and NATO. Among the key outcomes of the meeting was the framework that we adopted for the transition to increased Afghan leadership over the next four years through a province-by-province approach. High-level mechanisms, which include key national and international stakeholders, have been established to oversee the transition.

In 2011 we will see the launch of the transition process. Practical preparations are under way to that end. The commitment of our international partners to sustained and expedited recruitment, training and resourcing of the Afghan national army and police will constitute a key component of their redefined mission.

The Lisbon NATO Summit sent three key messages: first, a message to the Afghan people that the international community will not abandon Afghanistan and will remain engaged with the Afghan people for the long haul; secondly, a message to terrorists and extremists that they will fail in their efforts to take Afghanistan back to the days of tyranny and oppression; and thirdly, a message for the region that cooperation is vital and that our neighbours have a

role to play and a stake in the security and stability of Afghanistan.

Improving security, which remains a top priority of the Afghan Government, has been a key focus of the Afghan and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces. Despite isolated incidents of attacks and suicide bombings by the Taliban and other extremists, overall security has improved. The latest assessments show that ISAF and Afghan forces have for the first time in the past two years begun to regain the military initiative. That is particularly the case in the southern provinces, which once saw high levels of insecurity. The zone of security has expanded, with Afghan security forces exerting greater presence and control in areas previously held by enemy combatants.

Such success has a direct effect on public perception. In Afghan villages, specifically in the south, people acknowledge the progress being made and have begun to engage with local authorities and the Afghan and international forces. Consolidating the support of the local populace is vital for successful international engagement in Afghanistan. In that context, emphasis must continue to be placed on ensuring basic services for Afghans, as well as on avoiding civilian casualties during military operations. We welcome strengthened measures to foster coordination among international forces and the review of tactics, so that harm to local communities may be prevented.

It is now clear to all that an end to the sanctuaries in the region is crucial to the success of the international campaign to stabilize the region and eliminate the threat of terrorism. We cannot underestimate the importance of addressing the sanctuaries and safe havens in the region, which operate as command and control headquarters for terrorists and extremists. Without progress on that front, all our efforts will have been in vain.

Our recent parliamentary elections, the second since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, reaffirmed the commitment of the Afghan people to the democratic process. Millions of Afghans braved security threats to cast their votes to elect members of the National Assembly. Nobody expected a perfect election process. Indeed, the circumstances under which the elections took place gave rise to certain irregularities, including the closing of polling stations and the discounting of many votes by election bodies. As has been announced, the new Parliament will be inaugurated in late January.

The Afghan Government continues to focus on enhancing the country's relationships with its neighbours in the region. Effective regional cooperation is indispensable for solving the many challenges that Afghanistan and countries in the region face. We maintain high-level communications with the Government of Pakistan with a view to broadening cooperation in the fight against terrorism and order to promote peace, stability and economic development in both our countries.

We continue to strengthen cooperation with all our neighbours in the region. Afghanistan holds a unique position in the region, in which it is increasingly able to serve as an economic hub or an Asian crossroads in the greater region.

An historic event occurred on 11 December in Ashgabat at the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) summit meeting, where important agreements for the implementation of the gas pipeline project were signed. The summit was a key step forward in the realization of a regional framework for cooperation in providing energy and energy security.

Once the transition process begins, reintegration and reconciliation will be pursued as a matter of high priority in Afghanistan. In fact, reconciliation is becoming an essential political dimension of the transition strategy. For reconciliation to work, the Taliban must be ready to engage sincerely in peace talks; but for reconciliation to succeed, the Taliban must put down their arms, renounce violence and choose the path of peace. Success lies in maintaining our key asset: Afghan leadership and ownership of the reconciliation process. There is also a role for others — the international community, the region and the United Nations — to support the Afghan Government to succeed in its reconciliation efforts.

The Afghan Government has worked diligently toward implementing our goals in security, development and governance. Recent progress in all three of those areas is outlined in the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board's Progress Report on the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, released in November. The results overall were highly encouraging, particularly in the areas of governance, national transparency and accountability. In the first 100 days since the Kabul Conference, 95 per cent of

planned activities for creating an efficient and effective government were completed, including recruitment of 24 new district governors and the drafting of new anti-corruption laws.

The Afghan Government will continue to pursue effective and timely implementation of all national priority strategies. In that regard, we are monitoring progress and challenges in relation to all programmes through the recently established monitoring mechanism.

The most important assessment of the situation in Afghanistan comes from Afghans themselves. Public opinion in Afghanistan, according to recent surveys, reflects that the majority of Afghans continue to positively assess their Government and support national reconciliation efforts, and most importantly, they share the perspective that the country is heading in the right direction.

As transition begins, there are clear roles for both the Afghan Government and the international community. In the four years ahead, the measure of success will be determined by the strength of the partnership of the international community and Afghanistan. The focus of this partnership must be on building the Afghan Government's capacity to take responsibility. The transition process goes far beyond the training of Afghan security forces; our partnership must actively address not only security, but development and governance.

A stable and prosperous Afghanistan requires unity of understanding, unity of efforts and unity of action. And I assure the Council that we will spare no effort to do our part.

The President: I will now call on members of the Council.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Madam President, for your kind words about me and my delegation.

Given the topic of our discussion today, I would like to start by remembering Ambassador Holbrooke and his vast legacy. At the time of his passing he was doing his utmost to help yield a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. His loss will be deeply felt, and the world will miss this outstanding diplomat, who worked tirelessly for international peace and stability.

Turning to the subject of our meeting, I wish to warmly salute Ambassador Tanin. It is always a pleasure to see him. I also would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2010/630) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his valuable efforts and his comprehensive and insightful briefing.

Let me emphasize once again that we very much appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Mr. De Mistura in Afghanistan, in particular the assistance provided during the elections. We are heartened that the United Nations is determined to do its utmost, even in the face of attacks.

Turkey condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist attack on the United Nations compound in Herat on 23 October. Such deliberate terrorist attacks should not deter us. They should only strengthen our determination to assist the Afghan people in establishing lasting peace and stability. We salute the courage of the UNAMA staff and assure them of our continued support and solidarity.

The year 2010 was an important year and a milestone for Afghanistan. Although the situation continues to be serious and requires constant intensive and coordinated efforts, we believe that the Afghan Government and the international community are on the right track in Afghanistan. At the London and Kabul conferences earlier this year and at the NATO summit in Lisbon more recently, the international community and Afghanistan have sealed the process of sustainable transition to Afghan ownership and responsibility.

All along, we have believed that ensuring the durability of the achievements made so far in Afghanistan is directly linked with cementing Afghan ownership and empowering the Afghan people. In that regard, we are glad to see that the Afghan Government is showing strong political will to take that process forward and is doing its part to implement the Kabul process. At the same time, transition should in no way be interpreted to mean "exit". It is a gradual and irreversible process that will be defined by the needs and requirements of Afghan institutions. Therefore, the international community should be steadfast in its commitments and should align its assistance to conform to the conditions, priorities and requirements of the Afghan Government.

We believe that the United Nations in general and UNAMA in particular have an important role to play in the civilian aspects of transition. For transition to be effective and irreversible, Afghan institutions will need to be strong and capable, and in that the support of the United Nations is critical. Therefore it is incumbent on us to make sure that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMA have the means and resources they need to provide the assistance that will be required.

Lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan ultimately require political reconciliation. That process should seek to embrace all segments of society, give them fair opportunities to serve the Afghan cause and enable their representation. Thus we welcome the creation of the High Peace Council by President Karzai and the implementation of the Afghan peace and reintegration programme. We also welcome the setting up of the Salaam Support Group within UNAMA to provide support to that process as required.

We believe that elections are another requirement for peace and stability and the normalization of the political space in Afghanistan. In that regard, the holding as planned of the second parliamentary elections since 2001, on 18 September, in spite of the difficult security conditions, was an important stage in the vital political process. Turkey commends the Government of Afghanistan for its determined efforts under the effective leadership of President Karzai to make that possible, with the support of the international community.

We also commend the Afghan people on their active interest and participation in the elections. We condemn all the attacks and attempts to undermine the election process by violence. We offer our condolences with regard to those who have lost their lives.

While recognizing that there were irregularities, we appreciate the critical role played by the Afghan electoral bodies to make sure that the election results were as transparent and credible as possible. It is our sincere wish that the results of the parliamentary elections announced by the Independent Election Commission will benefit the people of Afghanistan. The swift commencement of the work of the new parliament will directly contribute to the success of the process by which Afghan authorities are assuming responsibility in their own country. It will also reinforce national unity and solidarity, which are imperative for lasting peace and stability.

While the support of the whole international community for the process in Afghanistan is essential, many of the challenges Afghanistan faces require, first and foremost, the constructive support of its regional partners. That is why Turkey has been particularly active in ensuring cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, as well as across the region, with a view to encouraging the countries involved to jointly address the challenges that affect them as a whole. In this regard, we hosted the fourth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) in Istanbul in November, and held in its margins a meeting of the Academic Platform for Afghanistan, with the participation of academics from RECCA countries.

The fifth summit-level meeting of the Turkey-Afghanistan-Pakistan Trilateral Summit Process will take place in Istanbul on 24 December. The Trilateral Summit Process, launched in 2007, has evolved into a vibrant platform that permits the development of multidimensional cooperation on a wide spectrum of areas.

Turkey is confident that Afghanistan's stability, as well as its social and political harmony, will grow stronger in the future. The implementation of the process requires determined leadership on the part of the Afghan authorities, and close coordination by Afghanistan's partners. For its part, Turkey is ready to its utmost and to support Afghanistan as long as is required.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive report before us (S/2010/630), and of course our thanks go to his Special Representative, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his informative briefing. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomed the holding of the Afghan parliamentary elections on 18 September and commends the Afghan people for their participation in that important democratic exercise, despite a challenging political, security and geographic environment that saw an increased number of incidents and civilian casualties on polling day. We commend the Afghan electoral institutions and bodies for their hard work. Despite all the difficulties, the accomplishment of the election represents an important foundation for

building Afghanistan's future. We fully agree with the Secretary-General's view that the international community and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) need to continue lending their technical and political support to the pursuit of long-term electoral reform aimed at improving the capacity of Afghanistan's electoral authorities.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers the promotion of peace and reintegration to be a very important tool for building a brighter future for Afghanistan. We welcome the inauguration of the High Peace Council by President Karzai on 7 October, as well as UNAMA's decision to establish an internal capacity for responding to specific requests from that Council for technical and practical assistance. We expect that such practical steps will continue to multiply and help create a firm path to the process of reconciliation in general.

It is also encouraging that the Afghan Government has achieved targets for increasing the size of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police, and adopted anti-corruption action plans. We were particularly pleased to learn that the Cabinet has approved a budget line in the State budget for the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. That is a hopeful sign for the future work of the Commission, which we hope will continue to make the protection of human rights a central issue in the future development of Afghanistan. In addition, we welcome positive measures taken in the area of access to justice with the opening of Ministry of Justice legal aid offices in several provinces. This represents an encouraging concrete step that should give the Afghan people more confidence in their country's justice system.

With regard to aid coherence, Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomes UNAMA's efforts to support the coordination of development activities at the sub-national level. We share the Secretary-General's opinion that aligning provincial development councils and donors with Government-led processes is essential to future development.

Regarding humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and development, we strongly support refugee return and welcome the return of more than 112,000 Afghan refugees in 2010, nearly double the number of returns in 2009. This would not have been possible without the valuable assistance of the United Nations and its agencies. We commend the work of all the parties concerned in creating the conditions necessary for the returns, including improved security in some parts of Afghanistan, the provision of employment opportunities and the Afghan Government's land allocation schemes. We reiterate our call on all actors to continue their valuable work to create the conditions necessary for economically sustainable returns.

We are encouraged by the development of regional cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours, and in that context we welcome the role played by Turkey in facilitating and advancing regional engagement in Afghanistan. We hope that the recommendations on priority investment issued by the most recent Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held in Istanbul, will encourage further regional economic cooperation and produce concrete results on the ground.

We also welcome the progress made in the area of mine clearance, which will help the country on its path to economic development, especially in rural communities. The concrete benefits of these actions include improved security for the Afghan people, as well as the opening of land for the new railway system.

Bosnia and Herzegovina notes with concern that the human rights situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated significantly compared with previous years. We remain particularly alarmed about civilians who continue to suffer from deadly attacks across the country. They remain the most vulnerable targets, and we call on all relevant parties to redouble their efforts in the area of the protection of civilians. We must engage all our resources to protect this innocent population.

Regarding the mission support and operational issues of UNAMA, we welcome the signing on 28 November of an agreement between the United Nations and Kuwait establishing a UNAMA support office in Kuwait in order to help maintain its vital technical and administrative functions in a secure environment.

In conclusion, our thanks go to the staff of UNAMA and to all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan for their dedicated work to improve the everyday life of the Afghan people.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his

thorough analysis of the situation in Afghanistan. We greatly value the work of Mr. De Mistura and the Mission he heads.

The Kabul process is at a watershed point in the continuing tense conditions in the country's military and political situation. The main source of the threat to Afghanistan and the region as a whole remains the terrorist activity of the Taliban and Al-Qaida, witnessed by the increase in their targeted acts of violence against the civilian population and United Nations personnel.

We note the successes of the international military presence in southern Afghanistan. So far, unfortunately, they are not part of a long-term positive trend. At the same time, extremists have been considerably more active in the north and north-east of the country. The Afghan security forces and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) must step up their activity to counter the spread of instability to the north of the country and across its borders, jointly resolving the complex tasks involved in normalizing the situation in Afghanistan.

The withdrawal of ISAF will be possibly only once it has discharged its Security Council mandate. That will require the formation of multilaterally trained national armed forces capable of combating terrorism, banditry and drug-related crime on their own and of stabilizing the overall situation in Afghanistan.

We support the policy of the leadership of Afghanistan aimed at national reconciliation. Its cornerstone is the recognition by anti-Government forces of the Afghan Constitution, the cessation of their armed struggle, and their cutting ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups. Any other interpretation of national reconciliation would be perceived unequivocally by extremists as a signal of the international community's readiness to compromise on the conditions. We reaffirm the imperative need to back the effective sanctions regime imposed under resolution 1267 (1999).

We view the very holding of parliamentary elections as an achievement of the Afghan Government and expect the country's new Parliament, in cooperation with the President and other branches of authority, to promote the building of a peaceful, independent, prosperous and neutral State in Afghanistan.

One pressing issue on the agenda is the intensification of international counter-narcotics efforts. We note the growing attention devoted to that problem in the report. Drugs proceeds fuel the Taliban war machine, corrupt Government structures and impede the building of a healthy economy. Having merged with terrorism, Afghan drug trafficking now threatens international peace and stability.

It has so far proven impossible to reverse the trend of growing volumes of opiates emanating from Afghanistan. The sharp reduction in this year's harvest of opium poppies was the result of crop disease. According to the recent data of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the surface area of drug crops eradicated in 2010 was the lowest of the past five years.

On the basis of the Secretary-General's data on the growing divide between the prices for opiates and other agricultural products, one can conclude that the attraction of investing in drug manufacturing and trafficking is growing. We again underscore the need for more active steps to physically eradiate drug crops and laboratories. At next year's third international conference on combating Afghan narcotics within the framework of the Paris-Moscow process, we expect the adoption of serious decisions that will allow the deployment of comprehensive efforts along the entire chain of narcotics manufacturing and supply, from the eradication of drug crops and infrastructure and the marking of precursors to including drug lords on sanctions lists.

The Russian Federation intends to substantially increase its contribution to implementing UNODC's special narcotics programme for Afghanistan. At the Russia-NATO summit held in Lisbon, President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev again drew attention to our long-standing proposal to establish cooperation to counter Afghan narcotics between NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which is actively combating drug trafficking in the framework of Operation Channel. Indeed, many NATO members are participating as national observers in the Operation.

Russia lends the international military presence real support in its efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. At the Russia-NATO summit in Lisbon, agreement was reached whereby transit conditions provided by Russia to NATO for shipments of cargo to

Afghanistan will also now cover return transit. We intend to expand the training of personnel of law enforcement structures in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Pakistan, first and foremost in the field of counter-narcotics. A so-called helicopter package has been approved to train Afghan pilots and to supply and service Russian helicopter hardware to meet the needs of Afghanistan's security forces.

We also assist Afghanistan bilaterally. We supply small arms and light weapons and related ammunition to law enforcement authorities. We are currently training Afghan police and civilian affairs specialists, including by increasing the number of our grants. We stand ready to rehabilitate facilities that were built with the assistance of the Soviet Union and are extremely necessary to rehabilitating the Afghan economy.

We endorse the Secretary-General's intention to assist in developing effective regional cooperation to resolve Afghanistan's problems. Contributions to that common effort are made by many regional organizations and configurations, including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We generally endorse the report's conclusions and proposals, but should like to see the analysis of the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on international peace and security become more substantive.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): Let me associate myself with Ambassador DiCarlo's words of appreciation for our colleagues who will leave the Council at the end of this year. I should like also to join others in paying tribute to Richard Holbrooke, an outstanding diplomat who will be greatly missed. Adding to the condolences expressed by the British Foreign Secretary, I convey the condolences of the British delegation to Ambassador Holbrooke's family, the United States delegation and the United States Government and people.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2010/630) and to the Special Representative for his briefing.

The United Kingdom is committed to working with the Afghan Government, the United Nations and the wider international community towards a more secure and more stable Afghanistan. While substantial challenges remain, it is important that we recognize that progress is being made. This progress is being achieved in partnership with the Afghan Government. Increasingly, the solutions to the challenges we face are Afghan-led and Afghan-owned.

We welcome the announcement of the final certified results of Afghanistan's 2010 parliamentary elections and look forward to the inauguration of the new Parliament as soon as possible. We applaud the courage displayed by Afghan voters, officials and candidates before, during and after polling day. The United Kingdom condemns in the strongest possible terms the attempts made by insurgents to undermine the polling process and violence directed against polling stations and voters. The elections were held under challenging circumstances. The Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission should be congratulated on the improvements that were made in the conduct of these elections and their efforts to minimize electoral fraud.

It is important now to focus on longer-term electoral reform. At the Kabul Conference, the Afghan Government committed itself to strengthening Afghanistan's electoral framework. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations to build support and momentum for an Afghan-led and realistic reform agenda, and stand ready to assist where we can, alongside the wider international community.

Afghanistan was a central theme of NATO's November summit in Lisbon. The United Kingdom welcomes the continuing commitment of all 48 nations contributing to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and to the cause of a secure and stable Afghanistan. For its part, the United Kingdom will work alongside our ISAF partners and the Afghan Government to realize President Karzai's objective of transferring lead security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces in all provinces by the end of 2014. The transition process will, of course, be dependent on conditions in each district and province.

We welcome the proactive approach of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to supporting the civilian aspects of transition through the prioritization of staffing and the support it provides to provisional authorities. We look forward to receiving further details on this subject from Special Representative De Mistura in due course.

Transition will see ISAF's role evolve away from combat and towards increased training, mentoring and support. It is encouraging to see the commitments that contributing countries have already made to the NATO

Training Mission to Afghanistan. Our training efforts are critical to increasing the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces and making transition possible. Although pledges have been made to meet immediate shortfalls in priority trainers, the United Kingdom will continue to press our international partners to ensure that the NATO Training Mission continues to have the resources it needs to fulfil its objectives.

Civilian casualties are of deep concern to the United Kingdom. We feel it important to restate the fact that the large majority of such casualties are the consequence of actions by insurgents, not pro-Government forces. We welcome the continued efforts of ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces to minimize civilian casualties.

An Afghan-led political process is necessary to underpin the military progress being made by ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces. We welcome the steps that the Afghan Government has taken in this regard, including the inauguration of the High Peace Council to lead peace and reintegration efforts and the development of an effective and sustainable reintegration programme. We support this political process for all Afghans who meet the Afghan Government's conditions, cut ties with Al-Qaida, renounce violations and agree to live within the Afghan constitutional framework.

As the Secretary-General recommends in his report, it is imperative that the international community support the Afghan Government in taking forward that vital work. We look forward to UNAMA's Salaam Support Group playing an important role in that regard.

Finally, Afghanistan is and will remain a priority for the United Kingdom. While the challenges we face are considerable, we are fully committed to the objective of a secure Afghanistan and will continue to support UNAMA in its efforts, and Staffan de Mistura in his very effective leadership, to realize that goal.

Mr. Nishida (Japan): I would first like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for his very comprehensive and informative briefing. I would also like to express my gratitude to the men and women of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), who have demonstrated a deep commitment to this very difficult mission. Of course, I also value the presence and statement of our friend Ambassador Tanin.

At the outset, I wish to express my deep sadness on the loss of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the United States Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. His life-long dedication to the international community will be remembered. I would like to extend my most sincere condolences to his family.

Japan welcomes the certification of the final results of the election for new members of the Afghan Parliament through an election process managed by Afghans themselves, although we recognize that the recent report (S/2010/630) of the Secretary-General indicates that there was widespread fraud and irregularities. We praise Afghan citizens for participating in the elections so that they themselves could decide their own future. We also pay tribute to the Afghan authorities concerned, including the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission. We expect the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan to proceed smoothly under the newly elected Parliament. We also hope that the Afghan Government will make the utmost efforts for longer-term electoral reform to initiate a freer and more transparent electoral system through strong support from UNAMA and the international community.

The Japanese Government welcomes the significant achievement of the NATO Summit in Lisbon in November. It was an important step that NATO allies and partners confirmed their commitment to creating conditions that would enable Afghan forces to take the lead for security in the country by the end of 2014. Japan is determined to provide assistance for strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Security Forces by fully cooperating and coordinating its work with UNAMA and other international donors. The Japanese Diet recently passed a supplementary budget to provide $540 million in assistance as part of a package worth up to $5 billion over five years. Japan is providing assistance for the salaries and equipment of the Afghan National Police. In addition, we plan to cooperate with Turkey in the training of police and we will enhance our contribution to the Afghan National Army trust fund. It is our sincere desire to contribute to strengthening the security capability of the Afghan Government. In that regard, Japan has been positively considering the possibility of sending medical and sanitation personnel of the Self-defence Force for medic education and the training of the Afghan National Army.

At the successful Kabul Conference in July, important progress was made towards the country's development when the Afghan leadership presented its national priority programme, to which the international community committed to align its assistance. Improving governance in Afghanistan is essential for the future development of the country. In that regard, it is of critical importance that the Afghan Government tackles corruption.

We welcome the inauguration of the High Peace Council. It is important that the Afghan peace and reintegration programme — created at the Kabul Conference — is steadily implemented by the Afghan Government in order to achieve tangible results and further progress in the reintegration process, which must be led by the Afghan Government with support from the international community. It is important that the international community, including Japan, not only provide the necessary funding to the Afghan peace and reintegration programme but also concrete ideas and advice for development projects.

Having entered a new phase in the transition to Afghan responsibility, UNAMA is now playing an increasingly significant role in support of the Afghan Government and people. The coordinating role of UNAMA is important for progress in the Kabul process. We highly appreciate the tireless efforts of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura. We will continue to cooperate with him and with UNAMA.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that even after we leave the Security Council, Japan's contribution to Afghanistan will remain unchanged.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura and Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for the briefing and statement they have made, respectively.

The Independent Electoral Commission recently published the results of the parliamentary elections in Afghanistan. The holding of those elections was a major event in the political life of Afghanistan this year and represented another significant step towards the Afghan people governing their country themselves. It is our sincere hope that the Afghan people will seize this opportunity to further consolidate unity and consensus and push ahead for the early achievement of peace, reconciliation and development.

Achieving durable peace, stability and development in Afghanistan is in the common interests of the international community. The Afghan peace and reconstruction process is currently undergoing a critical period of transition in which it still faces numerous challenges. That process must be effectively Afghan-owned and -led.

China supports the Afghan Government in its efforts to strengthen its national capacity-building to effectively exercise its authority over the whole of its territory. Balanced efforts are needed to advance all sectors — including economic development, security and stability, national reconciliation, governance, the rule of law and drug control — in order to make continuous progress in the Kabul process. We encourage the Afghan Government to take effective measures to expedite its economic development and improve its people's livelihoods.

China supports progress in building up Afghan police and security forces, thereby upgrading the country's own capacity to maintain national security. The transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan Government should be conducted in an orderly manner on the precondition of ensuring security and stability.

We support the Afghan Government in advancing the peace and reintegration programme. We hope that it will seriously consult its people and different political factions to steadily expand the political base for reconciliation.

In order to achieve durable peace, stability and development, Afghanistan still needs the sustained attention and support of the international community. The international community needs to respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, deliver in earnest and fulfil its commitment to aid the country and respect its priorities in that process.

The United Nations is an important partner in the Afghan peace and reconstruction process. China supports the United Nations and UNAMA in continuing to play a leading and coordinating role in the Afghan peace and reconstruction process, and hopes that UNAMA will make a greater contribution to coordinating aid to Afghanistan.

Mr. Onemola (Nigeria): I too would like to thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for the clarity of his briefing on the situation in that country. We also welcome Ambassador Tanin's participation and the perspective he has presented to us.

Madam President, Nigeria offers its deep condolences on the demise of Ambassador Holbrooke, whose pioneering work in Afghanistan cannot be forgotten. Our greatest regret is that he did not live to see the success of the work that he started in Afghanistan. What we owe Ambassador Holbrooke is to continue, so that the Afghans may realize his dreams for the development and security of the country.

Nigeria welcomes the successful conclusion on 18 September of elections to the Lower House of the parliament, the Wolesi Jirga, despite the huge challenges endured, including the intimidation of voters by insurgents, and reported cases of electoral fraud. The certification of the final results has enhanced the credibility of the country's electoral process and should serve as the foundation for further progress in electoral reform. We commend the Afghan-led Independent Electoral Commission for its efforts and contributions, and UNAMA for providing the requisite technical support for the elections.

The parties that have filed complaints with the Electoral Complaints Commission should now allow the legal process to take its course. The Complaints Commission's obligation to expeditiously and transparently deal with all pending complaints cannot be overstated. Both the Independent Electoral Commission and the Complaints Commission should take advantage of the ongoing discussions with the United Nations to further strengthen their capacities.

We welcome the formal inauguration of the High Peace Council by President Hamid Karzai. The responsibility placed on its members is crucial to national peace and unity. They should therefore create a platform for reconciliation, as envisaged, and promote peace and unity through confidence-building measures. That is particularly relevant to the attempts to reintegrate some armed groups that have expressed their commitment to disarming, renouncing violence and supporting the Government's development efforts.

The volatile security situation in Afghanistan continues to hinder the country's political and economic development. The persistent attacks by insurgents and terrorists on innocent civilians and on the personnel of non-governmental organizations and the United Nations deserve our strong condemnation, particularly the one on the United Nations multi-agency compound on 23 October. Our focus and priority should be on continuing to strengthen Afghanistan's security capacity and on implementing the Government's security framework. These conditions are unquestionably vital to reinforcing the Government's preparedness to assume full responsibility for law enforcement by 2014. UNAMA's technical and military training and capacity-building support remain important and will make the difference. By fulfilling its pledges, the international community will also be helping the process.

The international community must continue to support Afghanistan's fledgling democratic structures and show solidarity with the Government. Threats and attacks must not be allowed to hinder efforts to foster peace within the country and the entire region. We welcome Afghanistan's regional policy, emphasizing political dialogue with neighbouring countries. The policy's benefits are already evident in Afghanistan's improved and enhanced relationships with its neighbours.

Nigeria welcomes UNAMA's role in generating a coherent approach to donor assistance in support of the Afghan Government's anti-corruption agenda. We support the strengthening and expanding UNAMA's field offices and the efforts for greater coordination among United Nations partners through the development of the Integrated Strategic Framework, which is currently under way, as key steps towards UNAMA's effective delivery on its development coordination mandate.

Nigeria notes with concern the limited access for humanitarian activities, despite the increasing demand for such assistance. More concerted efforts are needed to address the situation. However, we appreciate the tremendous work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in facilitating the return a number of Afghan refugees.

Nigeria welcomes the announcement that the new parliament will be inaugurated in early January 2011. It is our expectation that the Afghan people and Government will seize this opportunity to deepen confidence- and nation-building efforts in order to

address in a concrete manner the issues of security and governance in the country. We also thank those who continue to provide training, mentoring and support to the Afghan military and police, as well as those who made financial commitments during the donor conference.

In conclusion, Nigeria expresses its appreciation to the staff and personnel of UNAMA for their dedication, and to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his continuing commitment to peace efforts in Afghanistan.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his informative briefing on the situation in Afghanistan. I welcome the participation in this meeting of the Afghan Permanent Representative, Ambassador Tanin.

Uganda joins other members of the Council in paying tribute to Ambassador Richard Holbrooke for his tireless service and efforts in the pursuit of peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. We once again offer our sympathy and condolences on his passing to his family and to the Government and people of the United States.

Uganda congratulates the people of Afghanistan on the completion of their elections, despite the irregularities that were reported. We consider the elections a positive step in the democratization and healing process of the country. Now that elections are over, we would like to encourage the Government to reach out to all Afghans in the quest for peace and stability in the country. There is no doubt that all sides in the political spectrum will have to make efforts and compromises in order to achieve a just and durable political settlement.

We are concerned that the security situation in some parts of the country has continued to deteriorate, in spite of the efforts of the Government, supported by the international community. Uganda condemns the terrorist attacks by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups, which are aimed at disrupting peace and security in the country. We welcome the efforts by the Afghan Government to forge ahead with their programmes for improving security, reintegration and the formulation of a framework by which security responsibilities will be handed to over to Afghan forces in 2014. We commend UNAMA for providing support in this transition period.

We welcome the improved bilateral and regional relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours. We are convinced that the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan are inextricably linked to those of its neighbours. We therefore encourage Afghanistan to strengthen even further cooperation with neighbouring countries on the basis of the mutual desire to respond to security concerns and enhance economic cooperation.

We also welcome the progress that the Afghan Government and people are making by increasingly taking leadership and responsibility for the development of their country. That is, in our view, a prerequisite for building sustainable peace and development.

Afghanistan will continue to require international support and partnership. We welcome the Kabul process agreed upon by the Afghan Government and its international partners. We call upon development partners to align their support to priorities set by the country.

Finally, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the staff of UNAMA for the work that they continue to carry out under very difficult and challenging circumstances.

Since this may be the last formal meeting of the Security Council in which I participate as the representative of Uganda, I wish to say, as we approach the end of our two-year tenure on the Security Council, how much of an honour and a pleasure it has been for me and my delegation to work with all Council delegates. I wish to express our sincere appreciation to you, Madam President, and the Council's respective delegations for the valuable cooperation and support that the Ugandan delegation has received.

I also wish to express our appreciation and thanks to the Security Council secretariat team and all other staff members of the United Nations Secretariat who have worked behind the scenes for their professionalism and unwavering support during this period.

Let me conclude by expressing our best wishes to the delegations of Colombia, Germany, India, Portugal and South Africa as incoming members of the Security Council.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for presenting the report (S/2010/630) and for his strong commitment to the peace, stability and development of the country. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, Ambassador Tanin. We paid the greatest attention to his statement, as usual.

We associate ourselves with the remarks honouring the memory of Ambassador Holbrooke.

Over these past two years during which we have had the honour and privilege to participate in the Security Council, the greatest concerns of my delegation regarding Afghanistan have focused on the impacts of the conflict on the precarious security situation of the population and the alarming number of civilian casualties, including attacks against United Nations personnel, and the building of an inclusive political process that can lead to stability and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

We have stressed that stability in Afghanistan does not depend only on the success of military and security operations, but rather on a process of dialogue and genuine reconciliation, as well as on addressing the real causes of violence by promoting development, respect for human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law. We share fully the position of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that there is no military solution in Afghanistan.

The support given to the strategy whereby Afghan forces will resume lead responsibility for security from 2014 has demonstrated the shared resolve to tackle the remaining challenges. However, we agree with the position of the Secretary-General that this strategy should be guided by progress on the ground and not implemented according to a rigid timeline.

Here, we commend the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and encourage them to continue assisting the Afghan authorities to establish conditions that will enable them to gradually take on full responsibility for governing the country and for its security and economic development, in keeping with the Kabul process. We reiterate that the prospects for the success of this process will be improved by an inclusive approach that incorporates women and ethnic and religious minorities.

My delegation reiterates its serious concern at the number of civilians, including women and children, who have been killed or injured in acts of violence linked to the conflict, which has risen sharply since 2009. We also want to express our concern at and rejection of the recruitment of children by Taliban forces and violence specifically targeting girls. We urge all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law and to do everything possible to guarantee the protection of civilians pursuant to Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1882 (2009).

We also reiterate our total rejection of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and we condemn all attacks against civilians and humanitarian and United Nations personnel. We hope communication and coordination between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Afghan and ISAF forces will continue to be strengthened in order to reduce civilian casualties and improve the security situation in the country.

Although the last elections, held on 18 September, showed a clear strengthening of Afghanistan's electoral institutions since the preceding elections, the high number of irregularities and complaints submitted to the Electoral Complaints Commission is a reflection of the challenges still to be faced in Afghanistan in the area of institutional capacity-building. Transparency and legitimacy in electoral processes are among the key elements that will enable the Government to better fight corruption and impunity.

It is important to take this opportunity to plan an electoral reform for the long term, a reform that would be designed by the Afghan Government itself, with the support of UNAMA and the international community, with a view to strengthening the capacities of the electoral authorities.

As regards the rule of law, we reiterate that the implementation of justice and accountability processes is necessary to building a sustainable peace in Afghanistan. That would include the fight against corruption and organized crime. We commend the joint initiatives, undertaken in particular by the Governments of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, to combat the production, trafficking and consumption of drugs in the region. That cooperation, which is based

on the concept of shared responsibility, will contribute to promoting mutual trust and common strategies to combat that phenomenon, which clearly has a direct impact on the security situation in the region.

Finally, we reiterate our support and gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his commitment and leadership in the pursuit of dialogue and reconciliation, as well as the personnel of UNAMA and the international presence in Afghanistan. We are confident that the country's leaders will remain committed to their national priorities and take advantage of the support provided to them by the United Nations to ensure the stability, well-being and development of the Afghan people.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. De Mistura for the presentation he has just made on the situation in Afghanistan, and I would associate myself with the statement to be delivered in a little while by the representative of the European Union.

I would also like to join all those who paid tribute, in their statements, to Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and his work in the service of peace and security in Afghanistan.

The elections of 18 September 2010 were far from perfect. They did, however, allow the Afghan people to express themselves, and they allowed Afghan institutions to prove that they were capable of preparing, carrying out and ensuring, on their own, the follow-up to those elections, which, let us remember, were held in very difficult conditions. The results announced on 24 November and 1 December 2010 by the independent electoral entities must be respected, and the new parliament must be convened as soon as possible. I echo the Secretary-General's warning against calling into question the entire election process under the pretext of carrying out a judicial inquiry.

I would like to reiterate my country's support to the independent electoral entities. Their role should be at the heart of the new undertaking that awaits all of us, that is, the reform of the electoral framework in Afghanistan, a necessary reform that has been put off for too long, as highlighted in resolution 1917 (2010).

By turning out to vote for their representatives, Afghans of all ethnicities, religions and political persuasions expressed the hope that their collective future would be decided by a debate within their institutions, and not by weapons. This is a powerful message, and one that calls for inter-Afghan reconciliation. There will be no military victory without a political solution, just as there will be no successful reintegration without true reconciliation. We continue to support the efforts of President Karzai in that respect, and we welcome the establishment of the High Peace Council. The hostile statements by certain Taliban leaders should in no way deter Afghans who are acting in good faith from the goal of peace.

That process must, of course, be led by the Afghans themselves. But we must continue to highlight the fact that they must respect the conditions that were clearly reiterated at the Kabul Conference, namely, renunciation of violence; absence of links to international terrorism; respect for the Constitution; and protection of human rights and the rights of women. We trust that the Special Representative will transmit that message, and we welcome his enhanced engagement in that process.

The sanctions regime established by resolution 1267 (1999) will, when the time comes, be a useful tool, combining incentives for and pressure on the armed opponents to join the democratic process.

Finally, an end to the crisis in Afghanistan and the country's stability will depend on the strengthening of regional dialogue, a dialogue that the United Nations is best suited to support.

Since our most recent meeting, in September, joint efforts by the International Security Assistance Force and the Afghan National Security Forces have allowed us to take the initiative with respect to the Taliban and to strengthen the presence of the Afghan State in some areas of the country. Little by little, the Afghan army and police force are increasing in power. Our efforts, whether in the military or training areas, are thus starting to bear fruit, including in the Surobi district and the Kapisa province, where the French forces are serving. That is encouraging news for the future of Afghanistan.

Our efforts are now aimed at implementing a strategy to transfer all responsibility for security matters to Afghans between now and 2014. That is one of the main outcomes of the NATO Summit, which was held in Lisbon on 19 and 20 November and at which the Secretary-General and President Karzai were present. That transition is in the same direction as the path that we have been pursuing since the Bucharest

summit of 2008, namely Afghanization. It must be carried out on the basis of security and governance criteria, so that the transfer is lasting and irreversible and takes into account the conditions on the ground. That process will gradually redefine the outlines of our civil and military engagement in Afghan. It is important that UNAMA prepare for it.

Despite those encouraging developments, we do not underestimate the difficulty of the challenges that await us. The security situation remains a matter for concern. In that respect, it is worrisome to note that civilians are increasingly bearing the brunt of the security problem. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/630) unfortunately confirms that the decrease in the number of victims resulting from operations by pro-Government forces, which was achieved through the hard work of our soldiers and the increased risks they assumed, is more than cancelled out by the increase in the number of victims of the Taliban, whose attacks target civilians and military personnel, indiscriminately.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the staff of UNAMA and France's full support for the work of the Special Representative. United Nations personnel have accomplished remarkable things in very difficult conditions, as recalled by the attack in Herat on 23 November. It is crucial that, in the period ahead, the United Nations stay actively engaged in Afghanistan, with financial means and a mandate adapted to the challenges that it will have to face.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his efforts and his briefing. Allow me also to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

Let me express once again our sadness at the loss of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the special envoy of the United States to Afghanistan.

Allow me to make the following observations. The mere holding of parliamentary elections on 18 September 2010, in a very difficult political, security and geographical situation, is a positive step towards entrenching democracy. It is indeed appropriate for us to welcome the encouraging participation by candidates and voters in such circumstances, particularly women.

However, widespread fraud and violations, as reported by the Secretary-General, and the deteriorating security situation, did not allow the Afghan people to express their will in the desired manner. We believe that there ought to be accountability for those proven to have committed violations or acts of fraud, in order to prevent such acts in the future.

We would like to reiterate our condemnation of the terrorist acts that have targeted innocent civilians and international forces. We view the lack of improvement in the security situation in many parts of the country with concern, as security is a sine qua non for economic and social development. Perhaps the International Committee of the Red Cross's description of the security situation as being worse than ever is a warning that the Security Council ought to heed. Perhaps it should lead the Council to approach the situation in Afghanistan in a more holistic manner.

Based on our belief that a political solution that ensures the genuine participation of key parties in governance is the way to end the crisis raging in Afghanistan, we support the reconciliation and reintegration process with a view to reaching a historic settlement between all sectors of Afghan society. We welcome the steps being taken to implement the commitments of the Kabul process, particularly in improving security, administration and development and gradually transferring all security responsibilities to Afghans.

On the other hand, we welcome the decision by the Organization of the Islamic Conference to appoint a representative in Afghanistan, as such a representative could play a positive role in the service of the country's security, stability and reconstruction. We also express our appreciation for the decision of the State of Kuwait to sponsor a support office for UNAMA staff, as well as for the offer of the Netherlands to set up an office to provide safe haven to staff in Kabul.

We stress the need for continuing regional cooperation and support from neighbouring States, for the situation in Afghanistan and surrounding countries is clearly interlinked. That has economic and security consequences, in particular in the fight against drugs. Drugs are a fundamental means for financing terrorist activities. Surely, the establishment of peace in Afghanistan serves the interests of all neighbouring States.

Let me conclude by renewing our appreciation to the United Nations and its specialized agencies in Afghanistan for their efforts to achieve development by providing health, education, food assistance and capacity-building and by improving the status of women, promoting human rights and encouraging the return of refugees. After a year of significant international interest in Afghanistan, Lebanon hopes that such efforts will continue next year so that the Afghan people may finally enjoy security, stability and prosperity.

Mrs. Dunlop (Brazil): I wish to thank Special Representative Staffan de Mistura for his briefing and for the work he and his team have been carrying out in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement. I would also like to join my colleagues in expressing our condolences and our appreciation for Ambassador Holbrooke's diplomatic work. Brazil also expresses its gratitude for the work done by the countries that will end their terms in the Council at the end of December.

As 2010 comes to a close, today's debate provides a good opportunity to take stock of an eventful year, in particular with respect to the relations between Afghanistan and the international community. The overall balance is positive, despite the need for further progress.

The Summit between NATO and the Government of Afghanistan last November completed the framework for the process of transition to increased Afghan responsibility for its security that was initiated with President Karzai's second inaugural speech and the London Conference. The message of the declaration signed in Lisbon is clear from its very title: Enduring Partnership. The transition process, consistent with the London and Kabul commitments, is to be carried out consistent with NATO's long-term commitment to a sovereign, independent, democratic, secure and stable Afghanistan. The challenge now is to translate that commitment into concrete realities on the ground.

The fact that Afghanistan has been exceeding the force-generation targets for its army and police is encouraging evidence of its determination to assume greater responsibility for its own security. Afghans deserve continued international support for such efforts, including through the provision of necessary equipment and capabilities. Such cooperation is crucial for bringing down today's record high number of civilian casualties, more than three-quarters of which were caused by armed opposition groups as well as by pro-Government forces. Although important progress has been made to protect civilians, more should be done to spare them further suffering. Redoubling efforts towards peace and reintegration is vital in that regard, as it is quite clear that a durable solution will not be possible exclusively through military means.

My delegation is encouraged that a number of alleged combatants from the rank and file of armed opposition groups have already approached Afghan authorities to express their intention to lay down arms and return to their communities. We hope that this development can become a consistent and firm trend that paves the way for substantive peace talks at the senior-official level.

Another important development was the participation of High Peace Council and Government officials in the conference on justice and reconciliation convened by civil society organizations and UNAMA. Increasing consultation with civil society regarding Afghan peace, reconciliation and reintegration efforts can contribute significantly to ensuring peace and strengthening the achievements of recent years, especially with respect to human and women's rights.

The parliamentary elections showed that Afghan authorities could learn the lessons of the past and move forward towards consolidating democracy. Even though there were a number of allegations of irregularities and despite security, logistical and political challenges, the electoral institutions were able to investigate and address complaints effectively. The will of the Afghan people and the decisions of the independent electoral institutions are to be respected by all without undue interference. However, as always, improvements can be made, including some that actually depend on the security situation, such as increasing voter turnout and making progress in long-term electoral reform.

Brazil welcomes the progress that the Government of Afghanistan has made in its Kabul process commitments. We appreciate in particular the establishment of a monitoring and reporting framework to track progress on the implementation of the national priority programmes, the achievement of more than 70 per cent of the October benchmarks and the detailing

of short- and medium-term implementation plans for the programmes. As the Afghan Government shifts its focus to their implementation and delivery, international support will be all the more critical and urgent.

In that connection, we note the paucity of information regarding the international community's progress in keeping its commitments to the Afghan Government. One possible measure to fill that gap could be to set up a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the fulfilment of international commitments to increase budget aid and realign off-budget aid.

The Fourth Regional Economic Conference on Afghanistan, in Istanbul, and the progress on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit and Trade Agreement were important milestones in regional cooperation with Afghanistan. The implementation of the Agreement and of the conclusions of the Conference can make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of Afghanistan and to its full integration in its sub-region. We also commend the holding of the Afghanistan International Investment Conference, in Dubai.

The response to the attack against the United Nations compound in Herat showed the Organization's ability to learn from past misfortunes. We commend the enhancement of security arrangements for United Nations facilities in Afghanistan and the increase in secure accommodation. The establishment of the support office in Kuwait and the acquisition of the Alpha compound have helped to reduce the deficit of international staff in UNAMA, although the vacancy rate remains high. We encourage the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to continue their efforts in support of UNAMA's ability to carry out its mandate.

In closing, allow me to express Brazil's expectation that, as 2010 was the year when Afghanistan and the international community renewed their partnership and set out a framework for a responsible transition, 2011 will become the year when we deliver on our mutual commitments and help bring about the prosperity, the stability and the peace the Afghan people rightly deserve.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): First, I thank Special Representative De Mistura for his briefing and for his work under truly challenging circumstances. We wish to pay tribute to the women and men working with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all the United Nations personnel who are in Afghanistan to support a better future for that country. Everything must be done to enable them to carry out their work effectively and to ensure their security. I also wish thank Ambassador Tanin for his important contribution to the debate today.

Let me join previous speakers in expressing our condolences to the United States delegation in view of the passing away of United States Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. I had the privilege and experience of working with him on matters of reconciliation and issues of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999), and I was deeply impressed by his commitment and his stamina.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the European Union delegation on behalf of the European Union. Austria wishes to make several additional points.

The past year has brought important developments for Afghanistan. The holding of the first international conference in several decades in Kabul was a particularly significant milestone. We welcome the progress made by the Afghan Government in the implementation of the London and Kabul conference commitments, including the elaboration of a framework to track progress for each of the priority programmes. The strengthening of the mechanisms of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board is another important step to provide for the necessary policy dialogue and effective implementation of the Kabul process.

In order to succeed, the Kabul process needs to include all segments of Afghan society. Maximum ownership and empowerment on the part of the Afghan people will be critical for the country's long-term stability. We furthermore agree with the Secretary-General's view that the process of transition must be guided by realities on the ground and should yield a peace dividend for the Afghan people. Improvement of livelihoods and the creation of sustainable income opportunities — including for women and girls — will be an important part of that effort.

We welcome the inauguration of the High Peace Council last October, as well as the establishment of

the Saalam Support Group within UNAMA to support the Peace Council's work. We urge the Afghan Government to consider the recommendations made by civil society groups regarding the peace process and to further enhance the inclusiveness of the peace and reconciliation programme through broad representation of religious and ethnic communities and women. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and succeeding resolutions on women, peace and security remain of direct relevance.

We also wish to acknowledge here the important work done by UNAMA in the field of human rights. UNAMA's recent report on the implementation of the 2009 Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women documents harmful traditional practices violating the rights of women and girls and contains recommendations that should be built upon to improve the situation of the female population in Afghanistan.

In view of the recent completion of the electoral process, we wish to commend the Afghan electoral institutions for their dedicated work under very challenging circumstances. We hope that the newly elected Lower House of Afghanistan's National Assembly will be convened speedily in order to take up its important legislative functions. We welcome the announcement by President Karzai that the new parliament will be inaugurated in late January. Comprehensive and long-term electoral reform needs to be pursued as a matter of priority.

The difficult security situation in Afghanistan continues to be of great concern, in particular in view of the significant increase in civilian casualties. The vast majority of civilian deaths and injuries, particularly the deplorable rise in casualties among women and children, were clearly linked to the anti-Government elements. We strongly condemn their direct targeting of the civilian population, including public officials and international staff. It needs to be stressed once again that that kind of warfare violates the most basic principles of international humanitarian law.

Let me further touch upon the drug situation in Afghanistan, which has been documented in the annual Opium Survey issued by the United Nations Office on Drug Control (UNODC). The Survey raises concerns about the continued cultivation and production of narcotic drugs in Afghanistan, mainly concentrated in areas where the Taliban and Al Qaida are active, as well as about ongoing drug trafficking. In that light, we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to increase its efforts against opium cultivation and drug trafficking in close cooperation with the international community and with the assistance of UNODC. A comprehensive approach tackling the areas of security, governance, rule of law and human rights is key for effectively addressing the drug problem in Afghanistan and in the region.

I wish to thank the Afghan authorities and UNAMA for the excellent cooperation I have enjoyed with them as Chairman of the 1267 Committee and would like to underscore the importance of continued cooperation, particularly in regard to de-listing requests. The consolidated list needs to remain a living document. Therefore we to continue to ensure that the list reflects the actual threat, which means that entries that are no longer relevant are removed and new threats are reflected by appropriate new entries. I am satisfied that, only last Friday, the Committee was able to take another positive decision on a de-listing request. At the same time, I would draw the attention of the Afghan authorities to the possibility for listed individuals to address the new 1267 ombudsperson.

As this is most likely the last public meeting of the Council in which I will have the honour to participate as representative of Austria in the course of my country's term on the Council, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for the kind words expressed by the United States delegation at the beginning of the meeting. I also wish to thank you and all other members of the Council, as well as the Council secretariat, for the excellent cooperation we have enjoyed during the last two years.

My country has always believed that serving on the Council is primarily a service that an elected member offers to the world Organization and to its membership. As we now return to the ranks — to our natural habitat as a permanent member of the General Assembly — we will continue to serve the United Nations family as best we can, based on the very same principles that have guided us during these two years. Our best wishes accompany the five new incoming members.

Mr. Moungara Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me in my turn to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura for the clarity and concision of his briefing on

the situation in Afghanistan. I take this opportunity to praise the courage, commitment and professionalism of Mr. De Mistura and his team in discharging the mandate entrusted to them by the Security Council.

I should also like to extend my condolences on the death of Ambassador Holbrooke, who strove to promote reconciliation and peace in Afghanistan.

Having listened to Mr. De Mistura's statement, my delegation notes an overall positive evolution in the situation in Afghanistan, which has been marked since the London and Kabul Conferences by some progress at the institutional and political levels, judging by the satisfactory conduct of the recent legislative elections and the national reconciliation process in a very difficult security context.

My delegation wishes to discuss in particular the following two points: progress made and the persistence of some challenges that contrast with the achievements made in the transition process.

With regard to progress, my delegation welcomes the outstanding work done by the Afghan electoral institutions to ensure the satisfactory organization of elections to the Lower House of the National Assembly. Despite certain shortcomings, the elections demonstrated the capacity of the Afghan people to assume control of their own destiny and the importance they attach to the institutional and democratic development of their country in a peaceful and united environment. The new Parliament must now begin its work to confirm its momentum towards democracy, which is a prerequisite for peace and stability in the country.

Such progress should not make us forget the scope of the challenges ahead. The security situation remains a source of concern, given the numerous ongoing terrorist acts affecting the daily lives of Afghan civilians, humanitarian workers and United Nations personnel. Rampant corruption also persists, fuelled by drug trafficking and impunity. We urge the Government of Afghanistan to do its utmost to effectively combat these phenomena, which constitute a real threat to the country's peace and stability. Such action would undoubtedly contribute to creating a climate of trust between the Government and the people of Afghanistan, on the one hand, and the international community, on the other.

Regional cooperation is an important link in the political, security and economic development process in Afghanistan. In that regard, we welcome closer diplomatic and trade ties between Afghanistan and its neighbours, especially Pakistan and Tajikistan. Such cooperation can also be promoted in the fight against drugs by improving law enforcement.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in its contribution to the effort to stabilize Afghanistan.

I wish to add my voice, Madame President, to the tribute you paid to our colleagues who are leaving the Security Council. We have appreciated all their efforts and contributions to the Council's debates.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

I welcome Special Representative Staffan de Mistura. I should like to begin by thanking the Special Representative and colleagues here today for their kinds words about Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. As Vice-President Biden said here in the Council last week, Ambassador Holbrooke was one of the United States greatest warriors for peace and served so ably here in this Chamber and far beyond. We will all miss him very much.

We continue to be impressed by Special Representative De Mistura's strong and effective leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We also deeply appreciate the work of all United Nations staff in Afghanistan, who operate under difficult conditions on behalf of the international community and in support of the Afghan people.

At last month's NATO summit in Lisbon, the Afghan Government and its international partners committed themselves to a clear plan to move forward. Together, we agreed that early 2011 will mark the beginning of a transition to Afghan-led responsibility for security, and we established a goal of having Afghan forces take the lead in security across the country by the end of 2014. Our ultimate goal in Afghanistan is to help Afghans build a State that can stand on its own, with support from the international community, and never again be a sanctuary for terrorists.

This transition of security responsibility, coupled with an enduring commitment to Afghanistan beyond

2014, is key to the success of our long-term efforts. The transition will be a gradual, conditions-based process, not a single event. Just as the NATO-Afghanistan partnership agreed at the Lisbon summit affirms the international community's broader enduring support to Afghanistan, so too will the United States continue to support Afghanistan's development and security as a strategic partner.

Training is the critical ingredient to making transition possible. Our allies and partners demonstrated their sustained commitment to this mission in Lisbon by meeting International Security Assistance Force requirements for Afghan National Security Forces trainers. Our actions prove that we are implementing a transition strategy, not an exit strategy. As transition progresses, we will look to UNAMA to play an important and growing role in supporting local governance, monitoring the human rights situation, and supporting Afghan-led efforts to reintegrate former combatants who seek to return to the fold of Afghan society.

The United States welcomed the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission's certification of the final results of the 18 September Wolesi Jirga elections. These important elections, administered under challenging circumstances, were the first parliamentary elections run entirely by Afghan institutions since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. We look forward to the formation of the new Parliament so that it can begin taking up its important constitutional role on behalf of the Afghan people.

As we move beyond this year's election, it will be important for UNAMA to remain engaged with Afghan electoral institutions to press forward with long-term electoral reform. We commend UNAMA's plans in this regard.

As we are meeting at the height of the Fifth Committee's consideration of United Nations budget issues, let me briefly underscore the importance of meeting UNAMA's resource requirements. This Council has given UNAMA an extensive mandate, and its ability to fulfil it while ensuring its staff's security requires adequate resources. The United States urges all Member States to carefully consider the recent budget request for UNAMA and to offer their full support to fund that vital Mission.

Despite many challenges, real progress has occurred in Afghanistan this year. Together with the Afghan National Security Forces, we have broadly arrested the Taliban's momentum, and even reversed it in some important areas. In many places, the gains we have made are still fragile and reversible, but we are unquestionably clearing more areas of Taliban control and more Afghans are reclaiming their own communities.

Civilian development assistance has been critical to those advances. We must press forward in 2011 with even greater energy and determination. This will be a critical year. To sustain those gains and security over time, political and economic progress in Afghanistan are urgently needed. Going forward, we must all continue to focus on the delivery of basic services, transparency and accountability. We should also not lose sight of the tremendous challenges facing Afghan women, and we must continue to support their efforts to further advance their security-related, political, economic and social gains.

The United States will continue to stand with the Afghan people as they work to build a stronger Afghanistan for the benefit of all its citizens.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union. I should like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

First of all, however, I would like to remember Richard Holbrooke. I had a chance to know him at the time when his diplomatic skills and determination were devoted to the Balkans. His passionate contribution to the cause of a free and democratic Afghanistan is an important legacy for all of us.

Italy welcomes the report (S/2010/630) prepared by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) on the situation in that country. We reiterate our strong support for UNAMA's work to assure coherence in the international effort and to help Afghanistan in its transition towards full ownership. That process, designed by Afghan authorities and endorsed at the NATO Summit in Lisbon, shall be steady, gradual and condition-based. The Summit decided that the transition would start in 2011, with 2014 set as a realistic target for a credible transfer of responsibility in the areas of security, governance and

development. At the same time, we all are committed to assisting Afghanistan as an equal partner beyond 2014, within a joint and coherent framework in which UNAMA maintains a pivotal role.

The Afghan Government and the international community now need to make a concerted and sustained effort to address obstacles to the achievement of a sustainable and irreversible transition. All the components of that process are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. In other words, progress in security, governance and development should go hand-in-hand with a constructive dialogue among all of the political and ethnic parties of Afghan society.

Political reconciliation must be an Afghan-led process that complies with national laws and fundamental rights and is supported by regional partners. Inclusiveness and participation should be the High Peace Council's guiding principles. Consensus on full respect for core national values will lay a strong foundation for Afghan institutions.

A successful reintegration process will contribute to reconciliation by building mutual confidence and curbing the influence of insurgency. That is why we welcome the Afghan peace and reintegration programme approved at the Kabul Conference as the expression of a balanced and Afghan-owned process. However, the programme should remain within the agreed red lines and be closely tied to the security agenda. To be sustainable, it should follow a community-centred approach and be gradually fine-tuned to meet local needs and realities. Improving living conditions, creating job opportunities and harmonizing traditional decision-making and dispute-settlement mechanisms with a modern decentralized administration are fundamental to a positive outcome in the reintegration efforts.

From that perspective, our endeavour is aimed primarily at ensuring that the Kabul process does not lose momentum. Notable progress has been made in conceiving a procedural and monitoring framework. Now we have to encourage the Afghan Government to translate national priority programmes into concrete action, so that tangible results will be directly perceived by Afghan communities throughout the country.

At the core of the implementation phase is the idea of Afghan potential for sustainable development, in terms of human and natural resources, and of the widest possible participation of civil society. Each phase should be geared towards the primary target of establishing a functional economy and an accountable and efficient Government.

While security is gradually improving, thanks to better training and mentoring of the Afghan Security Forces, Italy's action is shifting towards civilianization, with a focus on capacity- and institution-building and encouraging dialogue between Afghan citizens and their representatives. We are committed to fostering a balanced relationship among different levels of Government through enhanced coordination, increased administrative capacities and a predictable flow of resources from the centre to the periphery.

Justice and the rule of law deserve more attention and international support. We remain committed to a sound reform of the Afghan public administration and justice systems, to which we would provide our expertise while supporting the European Union's growing efforts.

Scarred by decades of warfare, Afghanistan has the opportunity to break the vicious cycle of poverty and dependence. That is why we are committed to helping to create an enabling climate for investment by improving financial services and local entrepreneurship. Our aim is to trigger a self-sustaining process that is rooted in the people and the resources available to them. Such a process will provide otherwise unattainable technical assistance, investment opportunities and modern processing systems while keeping the main focus and responsibility on the Afghan people.

In conclusion, it is urgent for us to start working with the Afghan Government, the newly-elected Wolesi Jirga and civil society, with the crucial support of UNAMA. A long-term electoral reform must be initiated that builds on lessons learned from the 2009 and 2010 elections. Comprehensive reform is indispensable to a balanced relationship between the Government and its people, within the framework of the Afghan Constitution.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): I would like to thank you, Madame President, for scheduling today's debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We are also

grateful for the latest report (S/2010/630) of the Secretary-General and appreciate the briefing by his Special Representative Staffan de Mistura. We also thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement.

I join others in expressing sincere condolences on the passing away of Mr. Richard Holbrooke, the United States Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. An accomplished diplomat, Ambassador Holbrooke served his country and the cause of international peace and security with great distinction in difficult conditions in various parts of the world. He will be missed by us all.

As the year draws to a close, today's meeting offers us a timely opportunity to comprehensively review the goals and commitments that we have been able to achieve and fulfil in Afghanistan, as well as the tasks that remain unaccomplished on the long road to lasting peace, prosperity and stability in that country. The overarching objective of the efforts of the international community has been to create an enabling environment for the Afghan Government to eventually assume full responsibility and take charge of its own destiny. The London Conference in January, the Kabul Conference in July and the parliamentary elections in September were significant political milestones in that direction.

The Kabul Conference marked the beginning of Kabul process, a new phase in the partnership of the Afghan Government with the international community. I am happy to note that the focus of the Kabul process has now shifted from planning to implementation and delivery. That is an important step on the road to a transition to greater Afghan ownership. The Secretary-General's latest report also highlights that a framework for detailing implementation plans for the short- and medium-term in all 22 national priority programmes has been put in place.

The holding of National Assembly elections in September, despite threats by the Taliban and other illegal armed groups, was an important step in the consolidation of the democratic framework in Afghanistan. We are particularly encouraged by the robust participation and campaigning by some 2,500 candidates, including 396 women. We hope the uncertainty regarding the results of the elections is settled sooner rather than later.

In our shared pursuit of sustained and tangible improvements in security, governance and development, the unity of purpose of efforts is indeed imperative to enhance the efficiency and overall coordination of the international community's presence in Afghanistan.

I am pleased to note that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is assuming a greater role in generating a coherent approach to coordinating donor assistance and the alignment of provincial reconstruction teams, donors and other implementation partners to the Government-led processes, including at the sub-national level. I could not agree more with the observation in the Secretary-General's report that, as the process of transition to full Afghan leadership and ownership advances, both the Government and the international community should be guided by realities rather than schedules.

We need to guard against the impulse to consider the peace process a shortcut to facilitating transition. Going down that path without respecting the red lines for the process laid out at the London Conference and endorsed at the Kabul Conference would risk Afghanistan backsliding into being a safe haven for terrorists and extremist groups. The international community must bear in mind the lessons learned from past experiences in negotiating with fundamentalist and extremist organizations, and ensure that the process remains Afghan-led, inclusive and transparent. India supports the Afghan Government's efforts to reintegrate those individuals who abjure violence, give up armed struggle, do not have links with terrorist groups, and are willing to abide by the values of democracy, pluralism and human rights as enshrined in the Afghan Constitution.

As the International Security Assistance Force prepares to gradually withdraw from Afghanistan, there is a need for adequate capacity-building of Afghan security forces, along with adequate enablers, before security responsibility transitions to them. The necessity of dealing with the terrorist sanctuaries and safe havens beyond Afghanistan's borders is equally important in this context. The adequate capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and other institutions is a sine qua non for protecting the country's sovereignty, plurality and democracy.

The security and stabilization of Afghanistan will remain a distant goal unless we are able to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes

elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Toiba and other terrorist and extremist groups, operating from within and outside Afghanistan's borders. As we have discussed today, though we appreciate the gains made in the southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand against Taliban strongholds, it is worrisome that a deteriorating security environment, especially in the north, has been an ongoing trend this year. The Secretary-General's report notes that there has been a 66 per cent increase in security incidents in Afghanistan compared to the same period in 2009.

Afghanistan's stability and economic development depend a lot on its neighbours and the region as a whole. The country's greatest economic potential resides perhaps in its immense potential as a trade, transport and energy hub, and as a bridge linking Central, West and South Asia, given Afghanistan's traditional cultural and economic moorings in South Asia. Growing economic interdependence will also help in weaning disaffected youth away from insurgency and militancy and in promoting regional cooperation. We support the wishes of the Government of Afghanistan to take the lead in this direction.

In India's efforts towards the stabilization of Afghanistan, the focus has been on development and humanitarian work to assist the Afghan people as they build a peaceful, stable, democratic and pluralistic nation. We have sought to assist Afghanistan within our means. Our $1.3-billion assistance programme is aimed at building infrastructure, capacity-building in critical areas of governance, health, education, agriculture and so forth, and in generating Afghan capacity and employment.

At the dawn of the new year, it is our earnest hope that the international community will remain steadfast in its commitment to supporting Afghanistan. Enhanced synergy and coherence of efforts on the part of the international community are critical for creating an enabling environment that can facilitate transition to greater Afghan ownership and put Afghanistan firmly on road to peace, progress and stability. We support the good work done by UNAMA.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to start by expressing our gratitude to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and to the other United Nations staff in that Mission, for their firm commitment and valuable dedication to strengthening peace and stability in Afghanistan. The central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts in Afghanistan is of paramount importance and enjoys our full support.

We are very glad of the political progress achieved by the Government and people of Afghanistan, including the recent successful Afghan-led and -managed parliamentary election. Those achievements and progress are attributable to the people and Government of Afghanistan, who want to freely take their destiny into their own capable hands and bring to an end the past sombre years under the presence of foreign forces in their homeland.

Nine years have passed since American and NATO forces entered Afghanistan with the aim of establishing peace and security and reconstructing the country. The main justification for the military excursion was, of course, eliminating the threat of terrorism. However, it is very hard to assess the achievements attained so far or the prospects for the future. Even the newly unveiled military strategy review issued a few days ago by the United States Government casts some doubt on the possibility of attaining the desired goals, as originally set forth, for the so-called Afghan war.

What is clear is that the suffering of Afghan civilians not only has not diminished, but is even on the rise. For instance, a few days ago the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) issued a warning about the dire situation on the ground. The Red Cross says that conditions for delivering aid in Afghanistan are at their lowest point in the 30 years since the ICRC first entered the country under Soviet occupation. In this regard, a Red Cross official said in an interview:

> "Our assessment is that we are worried. We are worried about more displacement, we are worried about more civilian casualties, we are worried about more difficulties with people to access health care, and we are worried about more armed groups being around. If you say that we are expecting more of the same for 2011, that would be putting it mildly."

I doubt that we can call this situation an achievement for the military forces in Afghanistan. Putting the lives of innocent people at the mercy of

drone attacks — yes, prima facie, there have been some achievements in that regard. In one instance alone, which took place on December 18, more than 50 civilians were massacred. How can we justify such wild and indiscriminate attacks as counter-terrorism operations? As a result of the foreign military operations in Afghanistan, we should stress that not only has the threat of terrorism not been curbed, but its evil effects have rather spread to other parts of the region, including my own country. The recent suicide bombing on 15 December at a mosque in Chabahar, a city in southern Iran, left scores of people dead and many more injured. We consider this abhorrent terrorist act the result of wrongful policies deploying foreign military forces in our region. Such policies have exacerbated tension and violence in neighbouring countries, with frequent spillover to our own.

Our approach should be based on true knowledge of the realities on the ground, as well as on an understanding of the social, political and cultural structures and historical experiences of the region. It is now clear that the hearts and minds of the Afghan people, who have undergone many hardships and so much suffering in recent decades, cannot be won by relying on the operations of an increased number of foreign military forces. Instead of dispatching more troops and increasing the number of private contractors, there is an urgent need for foreign forces to leave Afghanistan, for seriously continuing to strengthen the capacity of the Afghan National Army and National Police with a view to enabling them to take charge of security in the country and for handing over control and management of Afghan affairs to the people and Government of Afghanistan.

The narcotic drugs problem is still one of the most serious challenges facing Afghanistan. That menace has hindered the advancement of the country towards development and has put the security of Afghanistan and that of the region in real danger. Moreover, narcotic drugs, as the financial source of terrorism in Afghanistan, have served to create a breeding ground for terrorists, extremists and illegal groups that attempt to destabilize the Afghan Government. For decades, Iran has been at the forefront of a full-scale war against narcotic drugs smuggling. Thousands of Iranian law enforcement personnel have lost their lives or been injured. Billions of dollars have been spent to combat drug traffickers. We have shouldered a great burden in that fight. We again call strongly on those who bear the responsibility to combat narcotic drugs on behalf of the international community to take firm and measurable steps to curb this threat as soon as possible.

In the area of regional cooperation, Afghanistan's neighbouring countries share critical interests in that country's security and long-term stability. They should therefore play a more active role in promoting Afghanistan's socio-economic development. In recent years, we have undertaken a number of developmental projects aimed at rebuilding the country that have been focused on infrastructure, including road and railway development.

In conclusion, we are willing to continue to hold our well-established joint meetings with the representatives of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries in order to elaborate more concrete measures that are necessary for strengthening a regional framework in helping Afghanistan in the areas of development projects and security issues. The support of the international community in that endeavour could help us to strengthen this approach. In that regard, UNAMA's involvement in encouraging countries of the region to cooperate in halting the illegal trade in narcotics and the illegal movement of people, as well as in supporting Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve security and stability, are very much welcomed.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): Thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting.

As I begin my speech, on behalf of my country, I should like to recall the tremendous contributions of Ambassador Holbrooke. We offer our condolences to his family and to the people and Government of the United States.

I would like to thank Staffan de Mistura for his immense work and contributions to the Secretary-General's quarterly report (S/2010/630) on Afghanistan, which is a credible compendium of political and security developments in that country. There were some important milestones in December in Afghanistan's march on the road towards peace and security. The report also provides useful insights into the international community's efforts. I believe that the report is factual and substantive.

The report rightly underscores the importance of the need for effective follow-up to the Kabul Conference in terms of transition to full Afghan leadership. Before I continue, I should like to recognize that two important regional players — India and Iran — have made much the same point. I also believe that the report has emphasized that strong partnership between the Afghan Government and the international community is the keystone to a successful transition, which must have tangible benefits for the Afghan people. Accordingly, no matter what else we say, our collective support to the Afghan Government should be unwavering and tailored to its indigenous needs.

The Secretary General's report has documented a 66 per cent increase in security-related incidents in Afghanistan during reporting period, as compared to the same period in 2009. That cannot be overlooked. It is a matter of grave import, as it threatens Afghanistan's stability, and requires dispassionate political analysis.

The security problem in Afghanistan has vexed us during three decades of war. The capacity of Afghan security agencies, political dispensation, issues of governance and the exploitation of all those factors by criminals and drug traffickers have been part of a continuing refrain. The problem of security cannot be simplified by just externalizing it.

The Secretary-General had rightly noted the importance of the Afghan Government's peace and reintegration programme in the context of security. The London and Kabul Conferences also emphasized that point. A reconciled Afghanistan at peace with itself is the best guarantor of its own security. But in the process, I fear, it has tended to overlook the important aspect of democracy.

Elections to the Wolesi Jirga were recently held, with some strange results. In the completely Pashtun province of Ghazni, 11 members elected were Hazara tribesmen. Let me tell the Council, that is a very rare occurrence for Afghanistan. If any members of the Council have read *The Kite Runner*, they will know that is an impossibility in terms of racial pride. I think we will have to rise above this and be a little more integrated. I say this because it reflects upon the capacity of the Afghan nation to rule and defend itself and its sovereignty. We must not forget that democracy is an essential aspect. When it all began in Athens, the democrats were those who fought voluntarily without pay for the defence of their nation. The founding of democracy in Athens was based upon the military needs of that society. That is something that cannot be overlooked in Afghanistan. If the democracy is correct, it will bring people forward who will take their sovereignty and defence into their own hands. That is what needs to happen in Afghanistan.

Pakistan supports an Afghan-led and inclusive reconciliation process, with a view to bringing the opposition groups into the political mainstream. We have welcomed the establishment of the High Peace Council in Afghanistan, as well as the initial reaching out of important regional countries, such as Saudi Arabia, towards that process.

The sustained engagement of the Peace Council with the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference for support to and facilitation of the reconciliation process will be important. We support that engagement. The Security Council should also be a willing partner of the Afghan people in that important and delicate process.

Pakistan wants durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Stability and development in Afghanistan is in our national interest. In that regard, I would like to highlight three areas of vital significance that we feel must be pointed out.

First, the safe return of over 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees living in Pakistan is possible, I believe, only in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. We have paid an enormous economic, social and security cost in housing refugees for three decades. The prospect of housing them indefinitely owing to a prolonged conflict in Afghanistan creates a severe burden upon us, and no amount of international help really takes the burden off our back.

Secondly, the stability and security of Afghanistan is indispensable for us after the recently concluded Afghanistan-Pakistan transit and trade agreement. Our commercial and industrial sectors suffered previously, owing to the smuggling of goods from Afghanistan into Pakistan and vice versa, despite the transit trade agreement of 1963. As state institutions in Afghanistan regressed in the 1980s and 1990s, smuggling increased greatly. We therefore need a peaceful Afghanistan, with a strong customs and border security apparatus, to partner with us in ensuring smooth implementation.

Thirdly, a stable Afghanistan can guarantee the successful completion of important energy projects that benefit not just Pakistan but the entire region. Preliminary work on some of those projects has already started. We greatly value such progress. Those trans-regional economic projects are conceivable only in a secure and stable Afghanistan, which explains our position on the matter.

The quest for peace and stability in Afghanistan is driving our bilateral relations into a long-term cooperative partnership, which is highly desired. We are committed to strengthening ties in all areas. The recent visit of our Prime Minister to Afghanistan and the visit of President Karzai to Pakistan in September have reaffirmed and cemented our commitments.

We have pledged to continue with the ongoing assistance programmes in Afghanistan, and, in the framework of those projects, Pakistan will construct another 50 schools and basic health units across Afghanistan, despite the fact that, as the Council well knows, we need them desperately ourselves.

Pakistan is also ready to assist in the capacity-building of the Afghan National Security Forces. We are also engaged in security and intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan, including through the Tripartite Commission, which includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force. We do not want Afghanistan to become a theatre for proxy wars.

Pakistan greatly values the positive contributions of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), under the dynamic leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura. We cannot praise that leadership enough. It is just the right sort of leadership. In March 2011, the Council will consider the Mission's mandate. We align ourselves with the objectives of UNAMA and call upon the Security Council to provide it with the necessary resources to meet the challenges if faces.

I avail myself of this opportunity to thank Ambassador Apakan of Turkey and his delegation for his able guidance of the Council's work on Afghanistan this year.

I also wish to compliment all the outgoing members of the Council for their important work during the past two years and congratulate all the incoming members on the assumption of their membership next month.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Berger (Germany): First of all, let me join my colleagues and extend my special thanks to the Secretary-General for the report on the situation of Afghanistan (S/2010/630), to Staffan de Mistura for his comprehensive briefing and to Ambassador Tanin for his remarks. We commend Mr. De Mistura for his able leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and would like to extend our sincere thanks to the entire UNAMA team for their tireless efforts. At the same time, we would like to commend Turkey for its constructive contributions as lead nation for Afghanistan in 2010.

On the occasion of the tragic passing of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, I would like to offer once again my sincere condolences to the United States. I would like to pay tribute to Richard Holbrooke, who, as special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, forcefully and tirelessly pleaded for a political solution.

Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union to be delivered later in the debate.

I would like to add some remarks from our national perspective. Germany is a major contributor to the International Security Assistance Force and a major international donor of development aid and assistance to Afghanistan. In 2010, in the perspective of preparing the process of handing over responsibility for security to the Afghan Government, we have substantially increased our civilian engagement to $580 million.

I would like to focus in my statement on the following three aspects: first, the political dialogue and reintegration; secondly, the evolution of international engagement in Afghanistan; and thirdly, the future role of UNAMA during the process of transition and beyond.

The German Federal Government has presented a comprehensive report to the Bundestag, our Parliament, regarding the situation in Afghanistan and the progress made since the beginning of the international community's engagement in 2001. The report does not hide certain setbacks, but also stresses some encouraging positive trends, such as the facts that the training of Afghan security forces is progressing at a greater speed than expected; access to medical services across the country has significantly improved;

and infrastructure development projects in border areas in northern Afghanistan are starting to make a positive difference in the lives of the local population.

When presenting the report to the Bundestag, German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle underscored Germany's continued strong support for the Kabul process and the concept of the transition of responsibilities. He reaffirmed Germany's unaltered commitment to assist the Government and the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to rebuild their country. We remain strongly convinced that military means alone cannot and will never lead to a sustainable resolution of the conflict. In the end, only a comprehensive political process can lead the way to sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

Based on the mandate of last summer's Peace Jirga, the Afghan Government initiated the Afghan peace and reintegration programme. We all know that that process will need skilful diplomatic handling and patience, and we should provide the time necessary for it. The international community must also continue to financially support the Afghan Government in offering options for the reintegration of those who have renounced violence.

In 2010, Germany provided approximately $13 million in assistance to the reintegration programme, and we have earmarked more than $50 million for the same purpose within the next four years.

In the year 2010, at the international Conferences in Kabul and London and at the NATO summit in Lisbon, the principle of Afghan ownership and the framework for transition were put into place. A lot has been achieved in favour of security and political stability. The High Peace Council, representing key groups of Afghan society, has become operational. The Afghan peace and reintegration programme has been set up, and the Government is working on implementing the substantial commitments made. Democratic elections have been held, and we join others in urging all parties involved in outstanding issues concerning the elections to address them in a way consistent with Afghan institutions' responsibilities as defined by law and the Afghan Constitution.

The year 2011 will be crucial. The first steps of the transition will have to be made. And although transition does not mean immediate withdrawal, as the Lisbon NATO summit put it very clearly, the international community, together with the Afghan Government, will have to define the terms of reference for the transformation of its own engagement after 2014, namely, an international engagement in Afghanistan beyond combat troops.

At the NATO summit in Lisbon, Afghan President Karzai officially suggested that Germany should consider hosting an international conference on Afghanistan at the end of 2011 — 10 years after the Petersburg Conference — again in the former capital of the Federal Republic of Germany, the city of Bonn. The German Government responded positively to the Afghan President's request.

In the light of developments in 2011, that conference could provide a useful platform for evaluating the progress achieved in the process of transition of responsibilities. The international community might wish to use the conference to discuss the next steps to take on the road that remains to transition and the parameters of the long-term engagement beyond 2014. Finally, the conference could also provide an additional positive momentum to the political process in Afghanistan and the region.

With the transition of security responsibility progressing, the international community and the Afghan Government need to constantly reconsider their priorities and adjust them accordingly. That includes UNAMA. With the environment in Afghanistan changing, and the set-up of the international presences gradually evolving towards transition, the Security Council will need to reconsider UNAMA's priorities, competences and resources. The discussion process needs to start in 2011. The members of the Council will have to develop a common understanding of the future role of UNAMA in a changing environment in Afghanistan. The Council will need to provide clear guidance and appropriate financial means for UNAMA's role within the international network of mutually reinforcing civilian institutions for assistance in Afghanistan.

As an incoming member of the Council, Germany is prepared and willing to live up to its new responsibility and contribute constructively to this process. We are ready to further strengthen the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and to contribute to a peaceful, strong and prosperous Afghanistan.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Before I begin, Canada wishes to join others in expressing our deepest condolences to the United States delegation on the death of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke who, as others have said, worked with such great dedication and skill to bring a better future to the peoples of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura, for his very clear and penetrating report and for his extremely dedicated and effective work in Afghanistan.

As 2010 draws to a close, it is natural to look back and evaluate progress in Afghanistan over the past year. To be very honest, the results have been mixed. There has been significant progress, but also some setbacks. One of the most worrying trends in 2010 was the increased level of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. As the Secretary-General has indicated in his report (S/2010/630), total civilian deaths and injuries rose by 20 per cent in the first 10 months of the year, as compared to the same period last year. The overwhelming majority of those deaths and injuries, of course, were caused by insurgent forces.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan also continues to deteriorate. In particular, we remain concerned about the increasing number of internally displaced persons as a result of conflict and about the potential effect of volatile regional grain markets on the food security of millions of Afghans. These issues — civilian casualties caused by the insurgency, risk of displacement and food insecurity — are clear obstacles to a stable Afghanistan.

Central to combating the insurgency is for the Government of Afghanistan to provide security and basic services to its citizens. However, the Government's credibility and effectiveness are impeded by persistent corruption. Although the Kabul Conference commitments to combating corruption are a positive step forward, much is needed for their implementation, including the establishment of a legal committee to ensure Afghan laws comply with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the drafting and adoption of an audit law, and the provision of a statutory basis for the Major Crimes Task Force and the Anti-Corruption Tribunal.

Furthermore, credible representation in their Government will also help give Afghans the confidence to support that Government. Canada is pleased with the work of the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission in delivering the recent parliamentary elections. We encourage all parties to move forward in a collaborative manner that aims to ensure a Parliament that reflects the will of the Afghan people. So that the Wolesi Jirga can move ahead with its important work, an early date for the inauguration will be critical.

Despite the setbacks and challenges, 2010 was marked by successes as well. The Kabul process was launched to guide Afghanistan's transition towards the full exercise of its sovereign authority. The process thus far has been positive; the Government of Afghanistan presented an update on progress at the last month's Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board meeting; Afghan ministries with mutual areas of interest have come together to address common overarching issues; and drafts of the national priority programmes are now being consulted in concert with the international community. Much work remains to finalize these plans so that they will address the most pressing needs that exist in Afghanistan.

At the NATO summit in Lisbon, Afghanistan and the international community affirmed their commitment to the transition of security responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces by 2014. In this context, UNAMA will continue to play the very important role of coordinating the international engagement. It is therefore essential to provide UNAMA with the necessary resources to fulfil its important mandate.

(*spoke in French*)

We are encouraged by the progress and believe that Canada's continued engagement is important and worthwhile. As Canada's combat mission ends in 2011, a new country-wide engagement based out of Kabul from 2011 to 2014 will focus on four priorities: investing in the future of Afghan children and youth, especially girls, through programming in education and health; advancing security, the rule of law and human rights; promoting regional diplomacy; and delivering humanitarian assistance. An important part of Canada's engagement will be a Canadian Forces training mission of up to 950 members, in addition to a civil police training component.

Canada's overall objective in Afghanistan remains the same — to help build a more secure and stable Afghanistan that is no longer a safe haven for terrorists. We look forward to working in partnership

with Afghans and the international community throughout 2011 towards making it a reality.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Goledzinowski (Australia): I thank you, Madame President, for convening this important debate and for inviting us to participate. It has been a busy year for the Council, but nothing more important than the subject of this debate has been discussed. We thank everyone very much for their contributions.

I should also like to thank, as others before me have done, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, both for his briefing and, more importantly, for the extraordinary work he is doing in Afghanistan on behalf of all of us.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Ambassador Tanin for his important remarks.

Since the last Security Council debate on Afghanistan (see S/PV.6395), we have seen a number of important steps towards our shared goal of a stable and secure Afghanistan. We welcome the findings of the recent United States strategy review, and agree with the assessment that progress is being made. We also strongly support the review's key themes of ensuring that the gains of stabilization are irreversible.

In October, Australia held its own full parliamentary debate on Afghanistan — the first of its kind, actually. While a range of different perspectives were aired, the consistent message was one of support for Australia's continuing civil and military contribution to international efforts in Afghanistan.

In the past 18 months, Australia has increased its civilian commitment in Afghanistan by 50 per cent. Our work continues to be focused on Uruzgan province, where we are assisting the provincial Government to improve service delivery and increase its accountability. This financial year, our development assistance expenditure there is expected to reach $20 million, and our total development assistance in Afghanistan this year will be approximately $106 million. We are committed to channelling at least 50 per cent of our development assistance through Afghan Government systems.

These civilian enhancements build on Australia's military contribution in Afghanistan, which is approximately 1,550 troops. Australia will continue to assign high priority to efforts to building the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces through both our mentoring and training of the Afghan National Army's Fourth Brigade in Uruzgan province and our substantial contribution to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund. Our military is also involved in providing force protection for civilian efforts and in conducting and supporting operations more broadly across the southern region.

Australia is under no illusions that the decision to begin transition in 2011 will be an easy task. Transition will be a gradual process, to be achieved when the conditions are right, on a province-by-province and district-by-district basis. We look forward to ongoing consultations with the Afghan Government and our partners in the International Security Assistance Force on the transition process.

Importantly, as you yourself said, Madame, transition does not mean a withdrawal from Afghanistan. After transition to Afghan security lead, we must recognize that Afghanistan will continue to require support in training, defence cooperation, aid and development. The Australian Government has made clear our commitment to continuing supporting Afghanistan well beyond transition. The United Nations also, of course, has a key role to play in the international civilian effort to enabling greater Afghan capacity and leadership in support of transition. Australia fully supports the United Nations civilian mission in Afghanistan, and will continue to do so.

The conflict in Afghanistan will not be won without a strong political strategy. Australia welcomes the Afghan-led progress on reconciliation and reintegration, aimed at winning over supporters of the insurgency through targeted programmes. The Afghan national Consultative Peace Jirga, held in June, and the inaugural session of the High Peace Council in October were important steps towards this goal. Australia has committed $25 million to the Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund. Additionally, we are consulting with the Afghan Government about providing support for a deputy chief executive officer of the joint secretariat for the Afghan peace and reintegration programme.

Australia, like others, welcomes the release of the final results of the Wolesi Jirga elections. Although the elections were far from perfect and the extent of fraud has been well-documented, it is important not to lose sight of the positives. This was the first Afghan-led election in the post-Taliban era, and the Afghan

electoral authorities did a good job in very difficult circumstances. Around 400 women stood for office, and millions of Afghans voted across the country despite the risks. This showed how much the Afghan people value democracy. And while it is true that Taliban intimidation did affect voter turnout in some districts, the insurgency clearly failed to make good on its threat to derail the elections, thanks in part to the solid performance of the Afghan security forces. Now that the results are final, it is time for the international community and the Afghan Government to return their focus to long-term electoral reforms that will pave the way for successful elections in the future.

We cannot lose sight of the fact that sustained progress in Afghanistan depends critically on the engagement of Afghanistan's neighbours in the region, from whom we have heard today. All of Afghanistan's neighbours share critical interests in Afghanistan's security and long-term stability, and can play a constructive role in promoting Afghanistan's social and economic development. In this regard, the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to encourage regional countries to cooperate in halting the narcotics trade and the illegal movement of people and to support Afghanistan in its efforts to achieve security and stability are extremely welcome.

As I said at the beginning, this has been a critical year for Afghanistan, and 2011 will be equally important. But we have a real opportunity to build on the progress we have made in Afghanistan over the past 12 months. This progress could not have occurred without the dedication of all those involved in Afghanistan, in both civilian and military roles. We thank them sincerely for their efforts in 2010 and pay tribute to those who have paid an extremely high price in terms of loss of life and limb.

As a final note, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the passing of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, United States Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. I did not know Ambassador Holbrooke, but I did have the honour of meeting him. As President Obama said during his remarks to launch the review on Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ambassador Holbrooke's memory will be honoured and his legacy will be long-lived.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Peter Schwaiger, Deputy Head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Schwaiger: Like others before me, may I first pay tribute to the late United States Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke. European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton has praised him as a remarkable man, a true diplomat and a champion of peace and reconciliation.

The candidate countries Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this declaration. I will shorten my statement somewhat, but I refer interested parties to the full written version distributed.

Let me first join others in expressing our support for the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/630) on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and in thanking Special Representative Staffan de Mistura and his team for their determination and the important work they carry out on the ground, under difficult circumstances. I also thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

The Afghan Government, supported by the international community, is embarking on a crucial period of transition in which strong leadership will be essential to making the necessary tangible progress in the fields of security, governance, justice and reconciliation, and socio-economic development. The European Union hopes that new political momentum for reform and implementation can be generated now that the electoral process has been completed. We again pay tribute to millions of Afghan women and men who exercised their right to vote in the face of many serious security incidents.

Like the Secretary-General, we would like not only to commend the Afghan electoral institutions for their integrity and intense efforts to investigate and address fraud and other irregularities, but also to underline the need for long-term electoral reform, which should start as soon as possible. The European Union took a lead role in supporting the electoral process over the last years and remains strongly committed to assisting with the reform of the electoral process and institutions, in close cooperation with UNAMA and UNDP/ELECT. The European Union

generally believes that more checks and balances in the political system would serve to enhance its credibility, legitimacy and inclusiveness, as well as its efficiency and accountability.

The continuing deterioration of the security situation and the high number of civilian casualties caused by anti-Government elements are of utmost concern to the European Union. We are particularly worried about targeted attacks against the civilian population, Government officials and international staff in Afghanistan. In light of that, we welcome progress made in the build-up of both the Afghan National Army and Police, and also the mitigating measures taken to prevent casualties among United Nations staff.

We all know that there can be no sustainable transition of security responsibility without a civilian framework for stability that makes the country functioning and secure. Better governance, access to basic services, justice, rule of law and human rights are just as important as "hard security" and thus already a focus of EU assistance. The EU will henceforth reinforce its efforts in strengthening Afghan capacity and will work with the Afghan Government to foster effective and accountable State institutions, especially at the subnational level, with appropriate institutional links between the centre and the provinces. We will put even more emphasis on promoting the rule of law, civilian policing — both through the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan and the continued support for police salaries — and civil service reform.

This year's international conferences have defined the framework for transition and development so that the focus can now be on implementation and delivery. The EU is pleased to see the Kabul process gain momentum and commends that, in November, the Government could present a first 100-day progress report on the implementation of the London and Kabul conference commitments, as well as a monitoring and reporting framework. That speaks to its growing ability to take ownership and responsibility. We would like to emphasize in this context that tangible development gains are necessary on provincial, district and local levels.

The EU, for its part, is on track regarding the commitment to align with Government priorities and to channel more assistance through Afghan Government structures and multi-donor trust funds. At the same time, in the spirit of mutual commitments, we hold the Government to its undertakings and urge progress in combating corruption and strengthening financial management. In light of that, the EU welcomes steps to further strengthen the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in its support role for the Kabul process.

The European Union commends the Government of Afghanistan for the work done in the area of peace and reconciliation. The establishment of the High Peace Council was an important development in that respect. We welcome the diversity of representatives but could still see greater scope for the participation of women and minorities, the inclusion of civil society and the integration of considerations of human rights, truth and justice into the process. As Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security recognizes, women can and should play an important role in peace processes.

The EU will continue to back an Afghan-led, inclusive and transparent peace and reconciliation process and commends the role played by UNAMA, including through the Salaam Support Group. We fully subscribe to the Secretary-General's assertion that any political settlement must respect the Afghan Constitution and Afghanistan's international commitments, including human rights. It must not undermine the achievements made in recent years. We also encourage the regional actors to play a supportive role.

The situation in Afghanistan continues to concern the whole world and remains a key priority for the European Union. Just last week, High Representative Ashton addressed European parliamentarians and citizens to confirm that the EU's commitment is for the long term, and as the Council knows, it is very substantial. We call on everyone to make their contribution to a better, more secure and prosperous future for the people of Afghanistan.

The President: I would now like to make a further statement as the representative of the United States.

The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated today that the recent terrorist attack at a mosque in Chabahar, Iran, was "the result of the wrong policy of deployment of military foreign forces in our region". President Obama condemned the mosque attack after it occurred and extended his condolences. The assertion of the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran is totally without foundation.

I now resume my function as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to Special Representative De Mistura to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. De Mistura: I think the only thing I can say at this stage is that on behalf of all my colleagues in Afghanistan — both in Kabul and in all our different locations — I would like to express deep appreciation for the strong and clear support I have been hearing for the work of UNAMA and for the joint venture that UNAMA and the Afghan authorities are trying to carry out in order to improve the situation in the country.

The year 2011 will be very challenging. Seeing the Security Council united, as I saw it today, in supporting the work of the United Nations and the work of the Afghan authorities to stabilize the country will give us a lot of strength to get through next year.

The President: I thank Special Representative De Mistura for his comments today.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 2.30 p.m.